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1921

MOOD SONGS

COATES

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Mood Songs

Voices Within Myself

"Life is but thought; so think I will". —Coleridge.

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WALTER J. COATES

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DEDICATION

To those who dream dreams, sing songs, and see visions even in this wealth-crazed "movie"-mad age; who dare to cherish the Spirit of Idealism; and who insist on expressing life in the terms of Idealism at whatever cost.

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no 1

MOOD SONGS

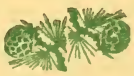
The Unspoken

DUMB are words,
For hearts in travail blunder;

Music baffles sound
And lightning outleaps thunder:

Thoughts outbulk expression,
And in our groping speech

Imagination flounders
Toward a symbol out of reach.



A Dream of Peace

(August 1917)

FATHOMLESS the Sea of Life
Whose depths are stirred
By passion and by discord
As of strife and war of jarring interests.
Deep the hate
Engendered by this lack of mutual trust
And concord among men.

Warring waves
Of racial aims; the tides
Of social feeling long represt;
The quarrels and piques of regal families;
The lust for nascent markets of the world——
All these, combined with greed of power and gold,
Make rough the ways of progress and of travel
Toward Love's Unbounded Shore.

The chart mismarkt
The compass led astray by false polarity—
God's plans are mockt
And Time put out of joint.

Be ours the task
To seize the rudder of this world astray—
This ship without a Pilot—
And to the haven of untroubled Peace
And Love and Life unfettered— to this bourne

Whence Christ and Mahmed beckon—
Whence the voice
Of poet, sage, and prophet vainly calls
Direct the course of action and ideal
Of wayward man.

So shall the singer sing again
Of sunny banks and gladsome pebbled brooks—
Dear common flowers and blushing violets;
So shall the dreamer revel in his books
And journey far to worlds uncharted— far
Beyond the ken of present mortal eye.

The Isles of Greece are not more luring than
Those Isles of Fortune
That wait upon a Universe of Peace.

Selfhood in Extremes

I SEEK within myself the magic springs
Of more abounding Life—
And on sure wings
Of mine own selfhood to surmount the strife
That wages war betwixt my two extremes:
One soaring up the starlit heights of Heaven,
One faltering down the vacuous deeps of Hell.

To a Wind-Storm

(March 1918)

WHIRLING, swirling, circling snow!
Your prismy crystals clear
The gusty wind of March is fiercely tossing;
The rising sun your serried banks are bossing
With sheen of silver lit by liquid glow.

Moaning, groaning, shivering wind!
Death's wail is in your voice:—
The sigh of troubled Spirits vainly crying
Shrill requiems for Winter now a-dying—
Erewhile so vivid— phantomed on the mind.

Sad, sad and soul-depressing weather!—
Omen from lofty crag, from lowland heather—
Out of old Winter's lust the vigor teasing,
Fair birthright of young Spring so boldly seizing,
Haunting the liquid air!

Type of the bonded Soul and fleeting breath!
The rigors of your sway,
To solemn dirge the heart-chords tensely trying,
Proclaim that here the sick and there the dying
Drink deeply soon of Lethe and of Death.

Our sole remembrance and our mortal fate
Are limned on clouds like yours and flakes of snow:
High keyed or low— shrill dirge or deep, or moaning—
Whistling elate, or in weird cadence groaning—
Your music shall abate!

Fit emblem of our fragmentary years—
On stony graves, on pulsing births impinging;
Or sunward bent, from tyrant Ice-King cringing:
Rude harbinger of bud and leaf—
Befitting our brief passions, yearnings, fears!

Elastic Youth, behind you, comes a-leaping,
Enthralled no more, but ready for the reaping
Of Time's brave deeds below—
Heedless, unwarned of Frosty Giants sleeping
In the next Winter's snow!

The Holiest God

GRIM FATES and wanton circumstance deny
Bold aspirations-- stifle many a cry
Wherein the soul invokes its holiest God,
Expression.

Conscription

The Feelings of a Registrant

O THE WAR is reaching for me, and I hear
its rumbling roar,
And I sense the battle's turmoil from afar;
But I feel the soft caresses and I see the curly tresses
Of my children here at home where my feet are
fain to roam:
And I dread to loose the anchor and heave out a-
cross the tides
Of those bloody surging billows where the Ark of
Battle rides!

For the wonted ties are pulling back where tender
tears will fall,
And my wife will feel the home-life growing drear;
But I hear the boys a-tramping where the nations
are revamping
All the policy and rage of a falsely tutored age,
And my heart is set a-throbbing with a mighty tense
desire
To emulate the heroes who have braved the flam-
ing fire!

For Democracy was falling; and Humanity now calls
For the sons who built her temples in the west:
And the "Rights of Man" still beckon where the
Friends of Man will reckon
With the Kaiser and his dreams for the misery and
screams
That have chilled the heart of Europe from that fa-
tal August day
When the hounds of War he loosened— and we'll
beat him if we may!

AUGUST 19, 1918

Premonitions

AN AUTUMN atmosphere's transparent glare
Records each quivering leaf and everywhere
In glistening sunshine glorifies the scene
Without. Far off, in bold and serried banks
Balsam and fir and pine glint darkly green;
And Bedouin Breezes, striking thru the ranks
Of straining boughs, ring forth a vibrant, keen,
Yet weirdly mournful music— playful pranks
Of an Austere Composer. Floating notes
In ghostly-wild crescendo there prevail—
Tolling sad tidings to a world that dotes
On death, that Death is near. Let none bewail
One hasting joy or glinting landscape's boon:—
Time, whirling on, unrolls no lifeless rune!

Free Souls

EARTH knows them not. In this reluctant sphere
No doubly gracious door swings open wide
To greet our harassed wills. Achievements bide
Not wholly mortal choice. Ambition here,
As elsewhere, ever kneels to fickle Chance.
Chaos would rule unchecked were man to choose
All unrestrained. Fate's cruel gyves enhance
To blessed gains the things we seem to lose.

The fettered mind— the shackled soul attunes
Itself to order— strikes a nobler strain:
True hearts will stumble, fall, and rise again;
Time will translate these lapses into runes,
And history recite the epic story
Of man, whose pride was dust, whose meekness glory.

Spirit of October

OCTOBER LEAVES are falling
On the wind—
October days recalling
Days behind:
The season of gold and of glory is passing;
Her fluttering foliage Nature is massing
In banks and in rows
To shelter her shivering nudeness of breast
From winter's fell blows.

October zephyrs are plying
Field and mart—
October symbols are sighing
In the heart:
The summer of song-birds and singing is sped
And winter valkyries shriek high overhead,
Shrilling dirges of death—
In monotone mournfully wailing a knell
For the sprouts of our breath.

October tokens are trying
Lighter tunes—
Faint intimations supplying
Nobler runes:
Immortality lurks in each denuded bough,
Out-hiding the frost and secure from the sough
Of the severing breeze,
Tho the dank diapason of death rides at will
Thru the murmuring trees.

October is waning and wasting
Day by day,
And April is looming— is hasting
This way:
A wedding for Autumn and Spring is arranged
And Winter, the outlaw, shall wander estranged
Like a wraith in despair;
For the Sun is the lord of each season and life
And will reign in the air.

New Power

A LIGHTNING FLASH! Briskly across the wire
Snaps vibrant Life in coruscating fire
Where humdrum currents lingered. Strange new power
Electrifies the line—— invades the hour!

So to the stumbling heart— the lagging lyre
Of mind, comes Inspiration! We aspire
Once more to swelling Song— constrained again
To master-strokes of ecstasy and pain!

Fading Twilight

FADING, fading, fading— Night draws on apace:
Fading into darkness— fading into space!

All the world is fading, but azure distance holds
The mystic benediction a Heart Divine unfolds.

Fading on the hill-tops, fading on the green:
Fading twilight falters toward the Vast Unseen!

Glaring Day is distanced; blaring noises fled—
Nature's mother-touch descends on the tired head!

When the whirl of blighted earth-hopes is unspun
Fading rays of soothing Light lull the weary one!

Intimations, glowing, gild the Orient:
But the scroll, Accomplishment, decks the Occident!

Fading and reviving— within the central Glow
Of destined Life and Action— all our moments go.

Foregleams

(An Allegory in Verse)

THE SUN, for many weary hours ascendent
Above night's gathering might and swart array
Of eerie ghosts that vex her dreams resplendent,
Has fled the wan, forsaken fields of day.

With wistful and averted orb she leaves
This unidealistic realm of man,
And, fronting fair Projected Isles, she cleaves
Abysms wild and seas Cimmerian.

Her bark adventures these uncharted deeps
Beyond our idle surmise, and explores
Illimitable oceans wild; then sweeps
Bold spirals to the Unimagined Shores.

Tho spectral Doubt may haunt and overwhelm
Our nether world where countless terrors spawn,
Her wings, unwearied, arch an upper realm
And spurn the azure to eternal dawn.

Her cosmic romance no beginning knows,
Nor end, while years exist or planets roll:
But ceaselessly, undauntedly she goes
To her predestined and relentless goal.

Clouding the saffron sky, with scheming plot,
Minions of Hate and Death forever hark:
And grisly phantoms of a world forgot
Shout fearsome words of doom from out the dark.

Her memory foretells unfrightened morrows
That fresh effulgent seas will surely bring:
Our dreams of Destined Life, defying sorrows
To such enamored promises must cling.

Nor dust nor dross of earth can blind to eyelight
The visions that from distant auras rise:
Momentous beacons, from the pregnant twilight
Reflecting backward, lure to high emprise.

Man trails afar; but still, in Nature's tresses,
An imaged glory beckons him along:
A floating glamor haloes all his guesses
And Intimations glitter in his song.

Here we but grope: yet far-off Light is verging
On disillusioned zones where stars attest—
Above, below— a Sanguine Agent urging
And earth and heaven respond to one behest.

Out of our interlude of dust and longing
The soul, bereft of earth, sometime will soar
Where disenthralled and kindred Spirits, thronging,
Gladden a rapt empyrean evermore.

When Fancy's sweet Aeolian winds are lifting
Caressing carols round us far and near,
The dark horizon breaks away and, rifting,
Bright foregleams of eternity appear.

By some fair stream in some far opal valley
Of vernal life our great adventure lies—
Where rainbow tints alternately will sally
And airy argosies surprise the skies.

The Monopolistic Social Order

A DISMAL DEN wherein Free Speech is sealed
And plundering upstarts revel in oppressions—
Where Tyranny, unmasked yet half concealed,
Flaunts in our face her base ill-got possessions.
Here poverty prevents aspiring thought
From soaring up to God or out to man:
Here cringing souls are trafficked— sold or bought—
To grant usurping wealth a longer span.
Some puppet singer, subsidized by gold,
Strikes idle strains of counterfeit Desire
From strings that boldly rang in days of old
Ere Freedom tottered to her funeral pyre.

Winter

THOU BASTARD VIKING of the polar zones—
Fierce jarl of ice and fell— relentless foe—
Chilling the very marrow of our bones
As, pitiless, thy minions come and go!

We know thee for the robber that thou art,
Turning our blood to ice each woful night:
Each morn reveals thy diabolic heart
That prostrates life beneath a bitter blight!

Of Fenrif's pack thou art— his fitting heir,—
Thy biting frost is venomed with his fangs;
And, stealing on us from thy frigid lair,
Thou harriest us with misery and pangs!

What laughing lips can bear thy loveless kiss,
What form survive beneath thy cold embrace;
What heart mistake thine irony for bliss
Or tryst with thee or trust thy cruel face?

Relentless monster! Mercy knows thee not:
Or if she feigns thy presence she beguiles
Our fancies till, benumbed, we deem thee hot
And twist our tortured lips in gargoyle smiles.

If hell exist 't is in thy thrice curst realm;
Hell heat is balm beside thy blighting breath:
If earth escape thy hosts that overwhelm
'T will be when thou thyself art whelmed in death!

WINTER OF 1918

At the Threshold

SOFTLY AND SILENTLY knelling a dirge
Over city and upland and glen
I hear the wild bells of eternity tolling:
Softly and silently rolling a surge
Over hamlet and moorland and fen
I see the wild waves of futurity rolling;
And messengers shod
With fire-mist from God
Bring Fate to the threshold of men.

Gladly or sadly, with laughter or tears,
While wild bells are chiming or knelling,
I vision the joy and the sorrow of life:
Gladly or sadly, with courage or fears,
While wild tides are ebbing or swelling,
I hear the mixed earth-sounds of concord and strife,
Where, heedlessly groping,
Or doubting, or hoping,
At the threshold of Fate men are dwelling.

The Call of Age

WE HAVE SEEN halcyon days that joyed to be
Who soon will weary of this round of clay;
And life once fair as dawn to you and me
Will drag thru irksome labor day by day.

Oblivious once to pain and powers malign,
We hailed new glory every opening morn;
But now we tremble lest the dark design
Of age leave our last days bereft and lorn.

The breath of youth no longer scents the lips
Grown tremulous and cold with earth's decay;
But Death, in all her musty odors, slips
Quite unawares upon our work and play.

A sluggish current mocks the blood that glanced
And wantoned thru our veins in crimson rout;
And halting feet grope feebly now that danced
And mumbled words replace the clarion shout.

We soon shall dwell alone amongst our dreams
Of things that were to be: we soon shall know
The epic of mortality that streams
Thru man's unending history here below.

Yet we will treasure with unshaken hearts—
Still treasure the old days that joyed to be—
Still train ourselves to take the obvious parts
Assigned us in the drama, Destiny.

Spent Ideals

EVER balmy breezes blow, yet ever
Elude us in this world of spent ideals:
Ever blazing starlight glows, but never
Dispels the gloom wherein Lost Purpose reels.

Ah, never, nevermore do lost illusions
We lightly cherish in our halcyon hours
Return: this void is black with waste confusions
Wherein we toil at every task but ours.

We labor on thru devious ways and eerie;
We plod thru pathways crooked, dark, and drear;
We travel, travel, travel till we 're weary
And worn with ceaseless toil and worry here.

And still we conjure new ideas that cheat us,
And still we woo our old familiar, Fate—
With fettered feet pursue ideals that beat us
Beyond the shadows of the Shadowy Gate.

And evermore with souls enraptured, yearning,
By lights that burn to ashes as we pass,
We hunt forbidden realms of fancy, learning
How vain our dearest visions are, alas.

Perchance beyond the Veil Unreal there lies
Somewhere Fulfillment we now court in vain:
Perchance beyond this haggard life that dies
Dwells that for which our spent ideals strain.

Night

LOOK OUT ACROSS this vale of dazzling white
To snow clad hills
Where evening shadows gather.

Between lie spectral fields and glooming woods
In lifting strata banks of blue and pink
That now gleam softly azure
And now again streak out to glaring red—
A brick-like radiance
That soon shall fade to nothingness in night.

So gleam the fields
Across the white expanse
Of Destiny.

Late looking thru interminable space,
I saw sunlit and gilded rainbow hues afar:
And, farther yet—
Beyond waste woods and dreary winding snow paths—
I saw the boding mists of time foregathering
In shadow ranks,
Like furtive raven messengers that tell
How briefly soon oncoming night may fold me
And mine amid her host of spectral stars.

Beautiful, bountiful Night!——
Bearer of balms, soother of sorrows,
Absorber of mysteries,—
Mute sorceress of uncertainty and terror,
Yet breathing the benisons of peace!

Lines to N——

THINK NOT thine image ever dim or blurred
Within my range of lovelight— my Ideals;
Nor deem thy voice forgotten or unheard
Amid the Silences my tongue conceals!

Some unsung lyrics ring with vibrant song;
Some thoughts are vocal, tho unspoken here—
Wherever Soul thru soulhood speaks, a strong,
Mute symphony pervades the atmosphere.

Such be the chain that links our lives in one—
Such be the blossoms that our brows entwine:
Such be the magic harmonies that run
Among the mysteries our souls enshrine!

Our yesterdays adorn the trophied urn
And Time still chants their stolen roundelays;
But, while Tomorrow glistens, Love shall burn
And light our feet o'er unforgotten ways.

Where trust in woman makes for faith in man—
Where constant fealty tends to sweet repose—
Our hearts shall rest in each, nor dread the span
Of Silences thru which our Oneness flows.

One Light: One Love

ONE Light, one Love alone, illumes my dreams;
One Star— just one— glows brightly in my sky;
One Lingering Presence thrills my heart and beams
Benignant on the voids from whence I cry.

One Girlhood greets alike my waking sleep
And dreaming wakefulness: one Vision stands
Amongst my vigils; and I nightly keep
Sweet tryst with her thru memory-haunted lands.

I feel the luring contact and the touch
That soothes with subtly soft and warm caress;
I search unfathomed eyes and marvel much
Amidst confidings that no lips confess.

Within this aura all my senses swim
By night and day, in crowds and deserts drear:
Within this aura glooming cares and grim
Desist and life augments from year to year.

So, ever shall one Light, one Star, redeem
My solitude amidst the wearying throng
Of unmarkt nebulae— one Lovelight gleam
Ascendent in my universe of song!

Absence

I THINK OF THEE and thought transfers
My soul again to one dear shrine:
Across the bleak forbidding hills
I press the lips still mine.

Time cannot sever hearts so leal
Nor space divide our love in two:
What beats within your breast for me
Throbs back from mine to you.

Dull intermittent silence falls
Between each gladsome surge of sea;
And these successive absences
Reveal my love for thee.

Think sweetly of me when the swell
Of separation bears me by:
Dream tenderly of me when tides
Of sundering duty ply.

My heart is like the homing bird
That, exiled, seeks a sunnier lea
And hears the far-off hunger-cry
Of mated harmony.

He calls across the wintry waste
To a bride within the swale,—
And I, across a drearier space,
To mine own intervale.

I call to *you*, as in the dear
Remembered days— glad days ago—
To you, in the old trysting-place
Our love-linkt memories know:

Recall me, Dearest, to the scene
These memories enshrine:
Recall me to the hearth-side where
My lips still cling to thine.

SWANTON, VERMONT, FEBRUARY 1920

Response

I KNOW NOT what you dream about tonight:
I know not how
The voiceless words that pass beyond my sight
Impress you now.

I know not what your lips will say tomorrow:
I know not why
My own may not from their loved breathings borrow
A quick reply.

Yet, knowing what nor dreams nor speeches are,
I can but know
Your heart will beat response to one afar
That loves you so.

ST. ALBANS, JUNE 12, 1920

The Silent Sweetheart

SHE SLEEPS above me on the silent hill
Where desolations whisper and where still
Sad thoughts disturb the sombre lifeless air.
I see her slender form amidst the throng
Of those celestial, and, despite the long
Years that have passed away since her so rare
Young spirit gently waned and waned away
Into the twilight of eternity,
I vision all her sweet simplicity
And loveliness and grace untaught;
And looking backward to that August day
Which brought her to me— all unguessed, unsought—
I marvel not how mightily she shook
My soul to its foundation. Memory's book
Recalls each vivid detail of the scene,
Records each accent of her silvery voice
Reviving former days and what had been
My future had she lived. —But I rejoice
No less in that awakening, that it broke
My spirit when she left me. I awoke
Thru her to manhood— found myself at last
In her— in her found life— forgot the past
And checkered years of boyhood— sought anew
Thru her to build my universe and woo
Thru her new gods of love and happiness.

I mind her lissome figure and her face
And liquid eyes— brown hazel eyes that gazed
So winsomely in mine. I still can trace
In mind the piquant girlhood that amazed,
The willowy graceful form— the copper hair
That hung in burnisht braids— still see her there.

The sudden rapture and the glad surprise—
The poignant freshness, the exhilaration
Of heights abruptly reacht— the new emprise
That quickened in me— all the animation
Of life re-born: I gave the answering call
Of youth to youth— gave love that challenged all.

Ah me, I still can feel as on that day
Long past I felt fresh life within my heart!
No loss that men call death can wash away—
No countless storms that rage and then depart
Can blot that early picture from my mind,
Erase the love or leave its thrill behind.

Still does she hold me with her melting eye
And still she melts me with her maiden smile
And, still entranced with memories, I sigh
For those first gleams of rapture that erewhile
Aroused my manhood. Winsome is she and fair
As on that August day I saw her there.

But now she slumbers on the silent hill
Where other voiceless Dreams are laid to rest
Where lost desires cry out and memory still
Pursues the phantom of a broken quest.

Hushed is the voice I longed so much to hear—
The rippling laughter that so sweetly rang;
Gone is the glory of the golden year
That once I knew— silent the song I sang.

O eyes so eloquent and softly brown!
O piquant loveliness, so stark and cold!
From your drear pantheon of graves look down
And greet me as ye did in days of old.

Still let me feel thy presence! Nearer glide
About my feet that falter here below—
Smile down upon the vale where I abide
Amidst the shattered dreams of long ago.

Wait yet awhile for me where angels dwell
In that ethereal clime beyond the blue:
Wait yet awhile— Eternity shall tell
The tale of love I would have told to you.

Not merely on the silent hill I see
Thy face effulgent or thy form descry:
Deep in my soul where love and destiny
Mingle as one my lost Elysiums lie.

Eyes of Blue

I CAN NOT PAINT in words the wondrous eyes
That oft have gazed in mine— those eyes of blue
So deep and limpid that they thrill surprise
And gleam on me thru mists of honey dew.

I could not search them out till years revealed
The purpose that lookt answering into mine:
I marvelled at the mystery they concealed,
But found them looking love in every line.

Dear eyes, look that forever! From your orbs
Of blue that gleam upon my absent days
Mine own eyes drink; and all my life absorbs
A gentle richness from their wondrous rays.

The Undiscovered Singer

Dedicated to J. H. F.— May 1918

THOU Solitary Singer!—
Breather at the lambent altar flame
Of pristine Life: No Hectic God be thine
Like that of shaven priest or sycophant,
Earth-cowed! But be thy chant the herald voice
Of Love primordial such as may have thrilled
Earth's wearied ears before man's jealous spleen
Found dungeon walls and bars and gyves for Eden.

I see thee a lone Champion in the lists,
Battling for free and seminal ideals—
Thy scutcheon blazoned with the bold device,
Blood red, of Liberty:—

"What truth I see
That truth is mine; and to Eternity
I fling it forth— be praise or blame of man
Or more or less. In me the Thing Divine
Dwells freely and its breath I body forth
With vernal passion. No account of death
Take I."

So to the fray.

Thy words
Shall yet be cut on granite monolith
In graven beauty! Letters writ in fire
Shall herald forth the image of a soul
Eruptive in its hidden flame of strength
And soaring will.

A rock-hewn character—
Full dainty, too, and tender— as befits
The mind high-poised, disdaining fellowship
With self-wise, mammon-hunting progeny
Of earth; but bent, withal, to call of love
And mild to clinging arms of infancy!

Most royal Comrade, thou,
Of burning hours in sylvan nooks
Or den of treasured books!
Where poets sang to us of love that made
For high emprise, of dazzling escapade,—
Of lowly toil, or vow,—
Or enterprise sublime in life and art
Where Destiny, invoked, declared her royal mandate
to the heart.

There sagas old we pondered o'er,
And Wisdom's words we conned:
There Fiction gave us cherisht lore
Or cap and bells we donned.
There Lowell, Byron, Whitman, Poe
We criticised or read
And worshipt stars of glittering Thought
From Masters live and dead.

Such days of life will linger on
When summers come and go:
Tho duties pall we still shall tread
The treasured wine-vats of the dead
While lamps burn high or low.

The breath of Him is on us yet
Who wrought man's primal dreams:
And Destiny, now chill and dour,
Will lure us with compelling power—
Will warm us in her sunlit shower
Of radiant lightning beams.

Flames at a murky sky thy genius rare!
Companions: the fumed clouds of stolid day—
Bald pillared fetishes of Custom's sway—
Industrial gyves— rude Realism's stare!

Stand firm to thy best muse and inward surge:
So time shall know thee, what thou really art—
Idyllic Prophet of the Burning Heart,
Raging at prurient Fact and earthly Demiurge!

Fling out thy heart-song to Eternity!
Vast are the fields within thyself unsown—
Romantic epos of fraternity
Or fervid pastoral of day-dream flown!

Rove freely Attic vales of kale and thyme;
Let bourgeois bards the Helot harvests reap:
In Sapphic vision o'er Parnassus sweep,
Nor mind the sweating furore of the time!

Leal Friends

I COUNT him leal whose deeds are firmly tied
To his professions. One such friend redeems
Much misplaced confidence in man—
And woman, too. Real friends are bulwarks staunch
As old Gibraltar— rare as truth is rare!

Sonnet to Milton

"Love Virtue: she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime." *Milton*

O MILTON,— Poet of the seeing eye,
Tho blind:— in height of vision peer of all!
Thy verses, chaste yet rugged, still belie—
As cadences melodiously fall—
The strophes of our modern bards whose cry
Out-Herods Herod in the mart and stall
Of carnal Passion. Pictured Lust will pall
On him whose song, like thine, is Soul's ally.

Not thine the road trod erstwhile and anon
By sensual feet that aim Parnassusward;
But thine the beetling path, rough, rugged, hard,
That boldly lifts itself athwart the dawn
Above the seeping valley and ignores
Exuding filth; but God in Song adores.

The Unfolding Ego

THE CRYPTIC KNOWLEDGE of unending years,
The puzzling harmonies of rolling spheres,
All prophecy and truth not understood
And unguessed laws of Universal Good
Await the glory of a day to be
When man's untrammeled spirit shall be free.

Debs Imprisoned

GAUNT, GOLDEN-HEARTED Leader, Debs:
O see
How Labor's sympathetic tribute comes,
Yet not alone! Friend of the workingman—
Friend also to whoever chafes to be
Where Wrong roams brazen. In this day when bombs,
Hell-shrieks of war and fevered edicts ban
The sweet, persuasive voice of Reason— thee
Force frightens not. Since Liberty began
And the Great Charter of Free Speech and Press
Was torn from tyrant hands at Runnymede,
Full many a Martyr rotted in duress
For crimes imagined. Nobly dost thou lead
Where weaker hearts would falter. Freedom's Knight
Risking thine own for every free man's right!

Thomas Hood

HE BREATHED a grisly dream upon the air
Of Eugene Aram, haunted from his lair
By restless Demons— sang the fetid dirt
And squalor of his age as none but he
Of all the rhyming English company
Could sing it— painted toil in verse
That women chant and laborers rehearse
Wherever pick-ax falls or fingers press the shirt.
He wooed Success in vain— if blase wealth,
Or ease, or comfort, or what men call health
Be so mistaken. Sullen Fate denied
Surcease of ills to him— or aught beside.
Surmounting Death, he winged to high emprise
And spanned Oblivion with his "Bridge of Sighs".

Redivivus

On receiving of J. H. F. his first autograph copy of "Flower of the Road"

FLOWER OF THE ROAD, you speak to me again
Of loves long gone— of comrade passions free!
Flower of Youth, your fervors strike amain
Amongst my mounting pangs of minstrelsy!

Your petals reek of Memories unsung
By public rhymesters— of sweet dales and dells——
The incense of pressed violets among
Earth's weary noises and our nausea spells!

Paint us anon more portraits of the past!—
Tell us more tales of brides and lovers cold!—
Who reigns o'er loss and death must ever cast
Such looks adown the starlit paths of old.

September 1919

Lines

Written in a Book of Shelley's Poems

THESE SONGS were shaken from the vibrant lyre
Of Shelley— wafted down on wings of fire
From heaven's high portals— an ethereal strain
Of melody from the Celestial Spirit
Who voiced herewith, that worlds might hear it,
His message of immortal Love and Pain
And God-desire—
Words that should kindle kindred hearts again
O'er Shelley's pyre.

The God that Shelley loved, but loved in vain,
Lives on tho daily crucified again
By that same world who crucified the poet
In every earthly way, tho not in flesh:—
And countless soaring spirits die afresh
Each day as Shelley died; tho few may know it
Or deem it wrong
That bards should die. But Truth— as ages show it—
Dies *not* in song.

Earth Pangs

SOMETIMES a song comes bursting from the deeps
Of pent-up passion and the dregs of pain:
Sometimes it floats from light ethereal steeps,
Or sobs convulsively across the main.

Not all great songsters deck the azure skies;
Not all great melodies comport with heaven:
When Hell storms down upon our high emprise
Our tongues roll thunder and our eyes dart levin.

The sorceress, Fate, turns many a limpid strain
Of joy to wailing grief or strangling cry:
They know not Life whose hopes were never slain,
Nor Immortality who never die.

Some reckless paeans ring from buoyant peaks,
Exultant. They belie our human clay.
But Anguish, from her dark abysm, speaks
In diapasons deep and true as they.

So tender flesh resents the torturing frost
That blights— so hapless winter yearns to spring—
That Muses languish, hopeless, exiled, lost
Where Silence dwells— or in their travail sing.

Black Mood

A Threnody of Death and Despair

Black thoughts are the kick of a sensitive nature against hard facts.

"That must be our cure——
To be no more. Sad cure! For who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being——
Those thoughts that wander through eternity." ——*Milton*

THE WORLD is dark and dreary, and I dwell
Walled in with direst misery and despair.
Life holds no Lamp for me; but, mockingly,
The more to magnify my midnight mood,
Brings forth a dead, charred wick that once burned bright
But now is crumbled embers. The foul soot
Assoils my groping grasp and numbs my nerves
With dread. My clutch upon Accomplishment
Relaxes: and the Soul that spread her wings
For flight shrinks back recoils upon herself
In fright at what she senses in this thing—
This grim and grimy Ghost of what has stood
So beauteous to her eyes—— a flaring torch
Put out!

The beacon that once beckoned from afar
To thrilling Hope and joyful Expectation
Now shocks me with repellant touch; for I
Have felt Response die out in me and leave
A wasty void of unfulfilled Desire.

So cold Despair crowds in and freezes up
My ardent marrow, and my very thoughts
Are blurred mentality. My days are draped
With dull depressing dreams, and the mirage
Of Immortality has disappeared.
A void of useless aeons offers up

Blank invitation, and the vacuous years
Yawn wide ahead; but close behind me, wreckt,
My fairest argosies in ruins lie.

So I, God's Darling, who essayed to raise
My sun-bright castles, tall with yearning spires
That shimmered in a galaxy of stars,
Now shape my course for *Death*, the Dread of Earth.
In keen suspense I live my life, to die
In a futurity of imaged woe.

With sickening shock I see the Narrow House
In phantom form appear— whose pinnacles,
Inverted, search the depths of all things mean
And low. Harassed by horrid sights I house
In catacombs deep dug— in festering filth,
'Mid damp and mouldering walls— and sound the pit
Of sordid misery. The stagnant pool
Of slime, the crawling worm or stealthy rat
Shall woo my fancy now! O blackened Sun!
Henceforth, tho all unwilling, must my mind—
An Ego that has winged auroral flight
Thru endless vistas of resounding space
In heavens eternal— grovel in the dirt
Beneath a sod! The while, in anguish dire,
Its gaze upon a slab of stone shall rest
And read the age-old lettered mockery:—

> HERE LIES ONE WHOM THE WORLD KNEW NOTHING OF—
> ONE OF THE HERD OF MEN, WITHOUT RENOWN.
> ON SUCH A DAY HE DIED. IN SUCH A YEAR
> HE MARRIED DORCAS DRAY, AND FROM HER HE
> HAD CHILDREN—SONS AND DAUGHTERS: BUT HIS WORK
> IS OVER AND HE SLUMBERS HERE IN DUST.

So runs the record of our finite days!
So this pathetic scroll of Time unfurls
The taunting threnody of futile years!

Who knows how high this prisoned Spirit soared?
What Light once lit this clodded lamp of clay?
Who treads the heights from which these orbs reached out
Across the far horizon of Desire?
Who cares what fate o'ertook this humble Christ
That offered up in sweat and agony
A free oblation for his helpless young—
His hecatomb to the unfolding years?
Or who may feel the dumb and bitter grief—
The misery, the vain regret, with tears,
That marked the dissolution of his dream
Whose feet, still dragging in the dust of earth,
Had scaled the lonely heights?— or who can guess
The vision of far splendor that was his?
To graft in man the scion of Eternity—
To water it with wine of Expectation—
To nurse within his breast the thirst for Good
And all Divine Attainment; then to spill
This rare and costly vintage on the ground--
To prostrate humankind at last in dust——
This is the acme of futility;
Yet this the vaunted Drama of our lives!

O Thou to whom we pray: If this in truth
Be all our meed or gain; if this be all
The joy of treasured days and dreaming nights;
If this be what we sweat for and the end
Of the tense pull of far Eternity——
If this damp wall of mud, this mound of clay,
Be our sole shield from the Destroying Worm
And *Personality* finds refuge *here*,
Then are we lost indeed! Close up the Book
And let it mould or rot in cold neglect!

JULY 1918

Pain--- Trial--- Tears

I WILL NOT YIELD—— no, never; since I know
That somewhere, just for me, Sweet Zephyrs blow:
I will not yield to trial or tears below
Or steep my Soul in bitter alchemy
When somewhere kind Ideals wait for me!

My heart upfires from pain as yonder ball
In space upfires o'er vapors that enthrall;
But well I know that, flashing to the call
Of the stresst Spirit, friendly orbs shall rend
This sombre gloom with rainbows, end to end.

No life so shrouded but the Spark Divine
Of deathless Light informs it;— nor shall mine
Own life be shrouded more. In God's design
Tears but half veil us from His wonted smile
That gleams on us thru answering tears the while.

May 1919

Invocation
To the Demon-Angels

Written in the exhaustion, agony, and utter desperation following a prolonged and nearly fatal attack of neuritis.

LET ME FORGET!— and count Oblivion gain;
Let me but sleep!— I shall not sleep in vain:
O let me rest!— if so my rest may be
Surcease of Pain and death of Misery!

Let me not linger while these limbs decay;
Let me not live when Joy has fled away:
O let me dream!— if so my dreams erase
This pictured Hell— these agonies efface!

Angels of life, I pierce your false disguise;
Demons of death, I sense your veiled emprise:
Think not, by changing masks, to thus allay
Or lull my fears, or fright my hopes away!

Ye frauds of time— ye counterfeits of Truth;
Cheats of all ages— frighteners of Youth:
I dare ye— I defy your utmost trials;
I know your ways and understand your wiles!

Beneath your rouged faces I discern
The likeness of myself. No need to learn
Your purport; I can see, glassed back to me,
My cruel faults and my eternity.

JUNE 7, 1919

Saints and Pharisees

WHEN YOUR SOUL is sweetly praying
And your spirit heaven-kisst,
Some self-sanctioned saint is saying:
"Save us from the atheist!"

Such is life amongst the pious
Tutored hypocrites of earth——
Such the court in which they try us——
Christian heritage by birth!

When earth's canting shams are ended
And her self-styled saints are dead——
When the hollow and pretended
Vows are vowed and judgements said:

THEN, I trust, the world will nourish
Buddha dreams and prophecy———
Nobler saints than these shall flourish
And still mightier Christs shall be!

The Vampire Church

Dedicated to the ecclesiastical Shylocks and priestly politicians of all denominations

LIKE A LIAR, by the rood,
Lives the church on Christ the Lord—
Like a vampire drinks his blood
And profanes his word.

As the dodder on the tree
Death, in florid leafage brings,
So ornate hypocrisy
On religion clings.

Stealthy, stealing on its prey
Like disease on budding youth,
Falsely, shamelessly today
Feeds the church on truth.

Christ has risen: true it is—
Risen from a tomb profaned:
Risen truly just where this
Recreant church has waned.

Risen not in ye whose proud
Lip-oblations mock his fame,—
Not in vauntings long and loud
That belie his name:

Nor in ye who stiffly kneel
On the gilded altar stair,
But in them whose hearts reveal
Kindly deeds and fair:

Risen in the healing word
Spoken by the meanest man—
Risen where nor pope nor lord
Plots a selfish plan;

Christ is truly risen where
Heart on lip, without disguise,
Far beyond the blatant blare
Of prelates meekly cries.

Cries the human Jesus up—
Cries the false disciples down—
Drains the brimming martyr-cup—
Dons the lowly crown.

Whited Pharisees are ye
False pretenders who inspire
Empty forms and bigotry
And your Master's ire.

Would ye feel his warming life?
Would ye know his matchless truth?
Leave your arrogance and strife—
Do his deeds in sooth.

The Interests

THE INTERESTS who cannot boss a man
Will break him. So they broke the gentle Christ
Who would not kneel to custom or obey
Their mandate in the days of prophecy.

Mamie's Eyes

Suggested by the two prize poems, "When We Dead Awaken" and "May Jones Takes the Air", as published by THE NATION in its issue of February 9, 1921.

WHO is who in Filbert Street?
When we dead awake and meet
May Jones mincing down the walk
Shall we pass her by or talk
Glibly with her?—— Shall we kneel
To her dimpled knees and spread
Supplicating palms—— and feel
Blah-blah noises in our head?

Tell me, ye whose muses get
Gold for Mamie, decollete——
Is she what our age should woo?
Does she coyly flirt with you?
Or, in search of cheap acclaim,
Do you cenotaph her name?

Wicked Mamie! Woful wights
Dream of you on Sunday nights
When their fancies ought to roam
To the guileless peaceful home
Where some gentler Prue and fair
Ponders meditatively
O'er the empty ingle chair
Where her lover ought to be!

Foolish lover! Foolish world!
That would see in brazen flesh
Thinly veiled by silken mesh
Aphrodite's charms unfurled—
That would worship, tho afar,
Lustful Mamies as you are!

Shut the lewd enchantress up!
Take away the tempter-cup!—
Lest our drunken eyes shall see
Farther up than Mamie's knee—
Take the wine-pot from our lip
Lest our resolution slip——
That our tempted souls may rise
To realms unseen in Mamie's eyes!

MARCH 1921

To the Prating Churchman

TAKE NOT the name of God, thy Lord, in vain:
Why mouth it loudly on each shifting breeze?
Why anger Him whose truth your lips have slain?
Go, purge your hateful church of such as these.

When

WHEN men forget gold and glory
And cling but to love and truth;
When women deny the story
Of vanity, ease and youth;
When age knows nor pain nor sorrow
And childhood remembers care;
When neighbors neglect to borrow
And niggardly hearts are rare;
When braggarts and fools are banished
And wisdom shall reign supreme;
When liars and thieves have vanished
And injustice is but a dream:
Then earth will confess her errors
And folk will renounce their sin,
And Hell will disgorge her terrors
And Heaven be ushered in.

Aspiration

I WOULD NOT trespass on the vested choir
Whose songs resound o'er far Parnassan heights,
Nor breathe my dreams in Promethean fire!
Each heart's desire— each aspiration rights
Itself in order in the Urn of Time:
The soul's ethereal atoms consummate
Within this Vast Alembic and dilate
Beyond the range of prophecy or rhyme.

So— Might I blink earth's slag and grimy dust,
Nor choke among its grosser fumes today,
But vision thru its bawdry and its lust
And in the Cosmic Whirl my drama play;
Then should this cramped and crippled mind attest
Thru some fair work its kinship with the best.

The Mystic Circle

LIFE a full Circle is complete, God-given;
Nor arc, nor segment, nor round oak, storm-riven:
An eagle in full flight— unkenned below;
A star full-poised in orbit— all aglow
With universal fire— supernal, free—
Its liquid heart sufficing, self-propelling:—
The same dynamic Force in you and me
We christen Mind, for want of wiser spelling.

But be it round or square, or short or tall,
Nor steep nor deep but owneth its decree—
A Thing Divine that, working all in all,
Unlocks the Past and opes Eternity.

Here, by the Sphynx of Being long concealed,
Nude Truth— a Delphic concept— stands revealed!

Life and I

LIFE CAME TO ME in humble guise and said:
"O Master, treat me kindly, for my fate
Henceforth is one, indissoluble with thine.
About thy destiny my heart-strings twine
As always and forever. Ye subsist
In and thru ME alone; and, if I list,
The flame ye cherish now shall mount anew
To unimagined splendor and the dew
Of an Eternal Morning kiss the brow
Whereon care lingers, and the soul, elate,
Shall kneel no more to Circumstance, as now
And erst she knelt; but, fortified and led
By an Omniscient Purpose, conquer Doom
And wing triumphant thru the gathering gloom.

Florence

WE DREAM of her who once filled all our days
With sunshine and with gladness— ere the dart
Of Death, descending on our grieved amaze,
Poisoned the dream and thrust our lives apart.

Spires

IDEALS count:
Big thoughts bespeak the man,—
And nations, too,
Evolve from nothing less spectacular.

Where vision lacks
And prophecy is dumb
No pyramids will tower to the skies,
No sphinx gaze out above the baffling sands,
No harp Aeolian waft to you and me
Breathings oracular of high emprise:
No mute infinity
Take voice,
No mastery vibrate
Along the strings of effort—
Nothing great
Can come from him who, sunless, rayless, stands.

Some Valley of Decision ever waits
In hushed expectancy—
Some great disorder
Invites afar—
Momentous issues border
These realms of unformed Purpose—
Vast estates
Stretch all about us cryptic, unexplored,
And, just beyond us, stored
In formless form, lurks Knowledge,
The high priestess of our faith.

The inward Ego and the subtle God—
Affinities— strike hands across Desire:
And from this liaison of fire and clod
Ideals spring, and mortals reach to God.

Encouragement

COLD the rough blast that blows no warming Life
From the wide cycle of the changing years!
Often repeating, yet seldom retreating,
Fateful in rhythm from first to last—
Time soon repairs the waste
Made by man's undue haste,
Moulding the Present to line with the Past.

Cold, too, the thought of snow,
Warm winds seem loath to blow:
Reluctant the seasons go
From Death to Life:
Yet tho the heart be weak,
Distant the Goal we seek,
Faint on the upturned cheek—
Kissed by his breeze—
Comes God's new Promise borne,
Rose tints to dying morn:
Rain falls to blanching corn,
Fresh hope we seize.

Dull thoughts are like stale bread;
Heaven arches o'er our head;
Truth's plummet drops like lead
From height to depth.
Truth sits enthroned still——
High on her sun-crowned hill,
O'er Life and Death and Will,
Fearless and fathomless
While Thought endures.

Brace, then, your limbs for fight;
Hold to your onward light;
Buttress with cheerful might
Each high emprise!
Let weaklings leave the fray,
Stay thou firm every day,
Courage will win for aye,
Bold Heart, arise!

Let us arise!
The night is spent at last;
The Day-star comes;
Chill darkness flees,
Heaven's joyous Herald
Voices glad refrain,
Let us arise!

Sophistry

WHERE do the Loved Ones we lose sight of go?
What sophistry of sight deceives the eye
And prompts reluctant lips to say "Good-bye"?
The platitudes we prate, or feign to know,
Of the Great Mysteries— what riddle so
Elusive as the faith they fain would bring?
What insubstantial mockeries they fling
Adown dull depths of Misery and Despair
To vex our dreams with! God, the Debonair,
Who dwells awhile, perchance, within this clay,
From His supernal habitat comes hither
And goes, forth-on, we know not how or whither—
Obedient to One Law whose ebb and flow,
Thru Life and Death, is Destiny for aye.

A Dreamer Cometh

"For us life is a matter of our personalities in space and time."

MY DREAMS defy eternities
And brave abysmal destinies:—
I rove the shadowlands of Time
To that idyllic, plasmic clime
Where— epic thought!— the Will of God
Sought embassage thru me— a clod!

This primal soul companioned truth
And beauty's blush adorned her youth
In those old unremembered years
Whose natal unity appears
Illumined by the cosmic dream
That paints me other than I seem.

Am I not I? How long, O Fate,
Shall this dissevered soul— so late
Enhaloed by the mantling glow
Of Harmony— pursue below
Her blind, interminable quest—
Her eager strivings for the best?

What bliss awaits, what ill betides,
What irony of earth abides
My freighted course— what issues hark
Portentously from out the dark—
I fathom not. I dare not doubt
My victory within, without!

Tempestuous Personality——
God-Ego, incarnate in me!——
I see thee, inchoate and rife
With dissonance, by pregnant strife
Arise at last, united, whole——
A perfected, consistent Soul!

Why Speak of Loss

WHY SPEAK of Loss when Life is on the wing?
Why cherish Doubt when Faith will answer best?
Why name your ills a hindrance in the Quest
When earth will green anew each coming spring?
As dewdrops to the dusty grasses bring
Their jewelled heraldry of Day benign,
So each succeeding circumstance malign
Presages harmony and added zest
To him who conquers. They are self-confest
Of sin who stumble weakly in the fray
And vex mankind with deadly sighs of sorrow:
The soul that laughs at Death and Loss today
Will rise o'er Loss and vanquish Death tomorrow.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1919

The Outcome

WHEN this body, worn and wreckt,
Sinks beneath a kindred clay—
Lip-lamented, garland-deckt,
From its work and play:

Will the spirit, pledged at birth
To the bridal kiss of God,
Haunt the harlot house of earth
With a lustful clod?

Can a bride so sweetly wooed
On the leal First Lover's breast
Die— a wanton— flesh-subdued,
Ravished, unredressed?

Shall she bed with breathless slumber?
Must the chords her youth-harp strung
Break— forgetful of a number
All unstruck, unsung?

Will the green, the golden past
Shrink to one sad day and brief?
Will it wither on the blast
Like a falling leaf?

May I not retell the story
Of a lingering love-lit age?
Must I, silent, mourn the glory
Of a bootless page?

Shall I climb the viewless summit
Of a single tear-swept past?—
Drop at last Life's sounding plummet
Down no height more vast?

What shall guide the questing spirit?
What shall teach the trembling heart?
Will a Presence, in or near it,
Balk the slayer's art?

Lo, the deathless Mind of God
Missions in this mortal soul,
And the mystic paths I plod
Mount from goal to goal:

Mount from First Great Life to birth,
Up thru birth and present strife,
Out thru death to endless worth—
Endless destined Life.

The Illimitable I

A MILLION WORLDS I compass here on earth:
A million aeons old was I at birth—
Yet freshly blown;
And millions more will rise to fill the dearth
Of joys renounced here which I yet shall own.

A multi-millionaire am I in thought:
My title flawless—
A legacy bequeathed yet dearly bought:
I claim what fettered minds and wills have wrought
Times past for the Great King uncrowned and lawless.

I sum within myself all I have seen:
In me converge all lives that yet have been:
A fertile field
Am I, in whom all spores may sprout and green—
A fire to whom all transient things must yield.

My million worlds stretch out across the sod
And skyward too
They lift their towering emblems. Yet I plod
Along these dusty highways mocking God
With fleshly lusts: myself I will not woo!

These earthly years I count as but a span
Who count a million aeons to each man:—
My worlds, conceived,
Stretch wider than the thinker's widest plan
To possibilities untaught and unbelieved.

Fruition

WHEN EARTH is left behind and time forgot,
We swell again to our old pristine height
And greatness. The free soul's inherent right
To round its nascent attributes shall not
Be narrowed or denied by God above
Whatever may be done by man below
To shorten our Utopias of love.
Out of this world of discord we shall go
To seek our true hearts in the unseen throng—
Outstrip, thru emerald isles, the wing-ed feet
Of seraphs to perennial Joys that bring
New beauty; and the stilted songs we sing
Today shall swell to harmonies that meet
In one grand heavenly concord of free song.

Opportunity

THE DAY OF FATE approaches in the Valley
of Decision—
The day of loss or choosing
The day of life or losing;
And Time holds out her hands, and, with a smile
of mock derision,
She proffers you two glasses—
One of sorrow mixed with pain,
One of pleasure with achievement—
As, in measured flight, she passes
Beating ecstasy, bereavement
From her noiseless wings again.

Prayer

GRACIOUS GIVER of the good,
Gracious Doer of the fair—
Be thy bounty understood
Here and everywhere:——

In the devious ways of Love
That we take so much amiss—
In the Dragon, in the Dove,
In the Serpent's hiss:

Where the sternest duties call,
Where the bouldered rockway bends,
Where the rushing waters fall
Or the fountain spends:

In the darksome day distraught,
In the lightsome day of cheer,
Be Thy purpose and our thought
But as one— so near!

Thou in us and we in Thee,
Evil falls and Fear no more
Frights our equanimity
On this spectral shore.

Though sepulchral shadows pall,
Though the raving torrents rend,
We will seek Thee out and call
On Thee, friend to Friend.

On the Connecticut

At Westminster, Vermont

A BROAD EXPANSE of river far below
And where my motor stands a narrow road
That, ribbon-like, winds round the ledgy hill,—
And puling waters trickle by the path
Whereon my car and I take needed rest.

I hear the hum of tractors o'er the bluff
That shuts me out from western mead and mount
And cloaks the figure of declining day:
But on the east where fair New Hampshire swells
Her vernal bosom flushed with brown and green
Illimitable reaches stretch away.

Along the river bank below my eye
A railroad yawns and paddies tamp the ties
And dago dialect disturbs the hush
Of April's brooding sylvan quietude.

Here reverie and peace abide— and I
Abide with them one grateful fleeting span
Far from the clash of wills and clink of coin
And venial life that frets the world of man.

APRIL 13, 1921

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